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ABSTRACT

This study examining public library use focuses on users and non-users and their information needs and sources for everyday living. Responses to a questionnaire completed by 105 male and 106 female residents of Ringwood, a Melbourne suburb, indicate that membership of the community public library was well above the Australian and overseas average. Respondents with higher secondary or tertiary education, and those in professional and managerial positions, were more likely to be users. Reasons for library use reflected the traditional image of the library. Reasons for non-use related more to personal factors than to dissatisfaction with or hostility to the library. Education and library use appeared to have some relation to information subjects considered important, with the library not seen as an important source of information for most areas of everyday living. Popular information sources were media, the city council, government departments, and professionals. There was overwhelming support for the concept of one center to supply all kinds of information. Most people felt the library could better publicize its services. Implications for the library, shortcomings of the study, and suggestions for future research are also discussed. (Author/MBR)

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LIBRARY USE AND INFORMATION NEEDS

IN THE CITY OF RINGWOOD

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Kirsty Williamson

Being a report of an investigation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the Graduate Diploma of Librarianship, in 1977.

Department of Librarianship
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1978

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ABSTRACT

A literature search revealed a need to study public library usage, with special focus on users and non-users. It also revealed a need to study information needs for everyday living and sources of information. Building upon findings of previous research, the present study examined these questions in the City of Ringwood. A self-administered questionnaire was completed by 105 males and 106 females, all of whom had children under the age of 16 years. Major findings were that 1) Membership of the Ringwood Library was well above the Australian and overseas average. 2) Those with higher secondary or tertiary education, and those in professional and managerial positions, were more likely to be users. 3) Reasons for library use reflected the traditional image of the library. 4) Reasons for non-use related more to personal factors, than to dissatisfaction with or hostility to the library. 5) Education and library use appeared to have some relation to information subjects considered important. 6) The library was not seen as an important source of information for most areas of everyday living. 7) Popular sources of information were the media, Ringwood Council, government departments, Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service and professionals. 8) There was overwhelming support for the concept of one centre to supply all kinds of information. 9) Most people felt that the library could better publicise its services. Implications for the Ringwood Library, shortcomings of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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1. LIBRARY USE AND INFORMATION NEEDS

Preamble

A.J. Brown in an article in Australian Library Journal in 1970 notes, "What almost invariably gets overlooked ... is that the people who use the library are vastly outnumbered by those who don't ... the average public library serves at the most 20 - 25% of the population".[1]

Usage figures vary somewhat. More affluent, middle class areas usually have a higher percentage of registered library members than lower socio-economic status suburbs.[2] If the frequency of use of those registered members is examined it is unlikely, even in these areas, that the public library can claim to serve the majority of the community.

Municipal libraries face problems. Many are struggling on inadequate budgets. Barrett Reid has identified the dilemma faced by many librarians: "We are under-financed, understocked, under-staffed and cannot serve our users well enough. Let's improve our services to present members before we look for more".[3]

However, such an attitude is inconsistent with the notion of the responsibility of the library to the whole community. Brown speaks of the "social responsibility of librarians", by which he means "responsibility to society as a whole".[4]

Others have pointed out the need for a change of attitude on the grounds of the need for the public library "to justify its existence, to the ratepayer, to the government sources of finance".[5] Pickering and Modra express this view:

> "A community service which is funded by all the community but which is utilized by less than 30%, has a responsibility to discover why the remaining 70% do not use their free service. Such a demand is not based on notions of social responsibility, small "l" liberalism, or notions of the library's function as an instrument of social change, but purely on the accountability of librarians for the use of public funds".[6]

Undoubtedly this is an important consideration. But if libraries are to justify their existence, surely they must show that they have social relevance, that they have an important role in society. This will mean more than providing service for an "educationally privileged sub-group".[7]

Mary Lee Bundy feels very strongly about the library's social commitments. Although, in her article in Library Journal (January 1972), she writes about ghetto areas in the United States, much of what she says has relevance in any community. She points out that:

> "The reason why the failure of libraries to respond positively to the urban crisis is important is because the most critical commodity influencing change in the urban situation is information ...
>
> Access or lack of access to strategic information can decide the success or failure of individual efforts to solve problems and enhance life opportunities".[8]

There is growing realisation amongst librarians and others of the vital importance of provision of information in a modern society. The

preface to an important overseas library study states:

> "The access to information, having it and using it, is a strong element of power for individuals and groups of people in a community. The realisation that having information is vital to what people want and need is a growing one".[9]

Thus, in recent years, librarians have become increasingly aware of at least two important facts. Firstly, they have become conscious that, with their traditional public library, they are serving only a small percentage of the community. The other fact is the importance of information, especially for the "information poor", who are not traditionally users of library services.

It is because of these growing realisations that public libraries have begun indexing information which is variously called "information for everyday living", "information for daily purposes" and "community information". The Dandenong Valley Regional Library Service, which has been granted $27,000 by the Library Council of Victoria to carry out a "Community Information Project" uses the term "information for daily purposes".[10] Included are such areas as health and welfare, education, recreation, social activities.

Thus it is that, for some <u>librarians</u> at least, the concept of the public library is changing.

Relevant Research

From the literature concerned with library use, areas which emerge as important are the proportion of the community involved in library use; the kinds of people who are users, their frequency of use and their reasons for use; and the kinds of people who are not users and their reasons for non-use. Of increasing importance are such areas as kinds of information needs for everyday living, how people try to meet these needs, and how they see the library in terms of their information needs. Involved in this is the image of the public library and the publicity of its services.

Use of Libraries

The minority use of libraries referred to earlier has been confirmed by research both overseas and in Australia.

In 1962, a study by Cromwbridge of seven London boroughs found that 30% of the sample of 1,306 persons (over the age of 15) belonged to the public library.[11] The underlying question of Cromwbridge's report was: "Are the libraries serving as many people as they could, as well as they might?"[12] His conclusions were that libraries could be relevant to many more people in the community. One reason was the evidence from his survey that many people have a limited idea of what a public library can offer them.

A study sponsored by the United States National Advisory Commission on Libraries in 1969 and published as Libraries at Large defined users as adults who claimed to have visited a public library at least once during the preceding three-month period. It was found that "three out of every ten adults in the United States can be characterized as users of public libraries by this criterion".[13]

[illegible] in an article in Australian Library Journal in May 1972 showed that of 2,800,000 Victorians, who could at that time use a public library if they wished, only 930,187 were currently registered as members. He adds "... that is just under 33% of the population served and a little less than a quarter of the total Victorian population".[8]

The large scale surveying study of the usage of public libraries, Libraries and People in Melbourne, was commissioned by the Library Council of Victoria and published in 1975. 3,982 randomly selected houses were visited in this survey of four different areas of Melbourne. Library users were defined as those who claimed to have used the local public library within the last twelve months. While there was some variation in the figures (Camberwell having 38% adult usage and Altona 29%), results has really confirmed overseas findings.[9]

In sum, therefore, both both overseas and Australian research that on average, about 30% of the community uses the public library. It is a service which appears, at this stage, to be relevant to a minority.

Library membership and library use

It seems that official figures of the numbers belonging to public libraries are only a very rough guide to actual membership. One problem is the trend to lengthen the period of validity of tickets. This means that membership figures become artificially inflated because non-attending members names are not removed as frequently as before.[10]

Also one and sometimes all the library do not necessarily correspond with membership and non-membership. It is possible for non-members to use facilities other than borrowing facilities offered by the library. Cambridge's findings were, in fact, that "the great majority of people

who do not belong to public libraries do not use them is those other ways of life".[17]

Interestingly, library membership is not a guarantee of use. Sondergaard found that 81% of the library members in his sample boroughs were frequent library users (that is, they used the library at least once a month).[18] Using the same criterion of frequent use, Lockhead in his survey of ten British library authorities, Hendon County Borough and Ruislip-Northwood Borough, during the late 1960's, found that 61% of members were frequent users. He also found that 14% of non-members were frequent users.[19] His findings mirrored those of Sondergaard.

A surprising finding made by Lockhead was that almost half those interviewed in their home visited library authority (109 out of 210). When a check was made with the library authorities, only 19% of the 109 responses were confirmed.[20]

The Baltimore study, Libraries and People in Baltimore, did not look at frequency of use in relation to library membership. It did find, however, that 8% of adults use the local library, but are not registered borrowers.[21]

Thus, findings on the relation between library membership and library use differ. British researchers have found that the majority of library members are frequent users. But findings as to library use by non-members have not proved conclusive. It seems, also, that official figures of library membership must be treated with caution.

Frequency of Library Use

Mention has already been made of the fact that Sondergaard and

Lockham found that the majority of their library members were frequent users. 28% of Groombridge's library members visited the library at least weekly, while 32% came once a fortnight and 23% once a month.[22] *Claire Lipsman* whose research was carried out in 15 cities of the United States during 1969, and included a large proportion of ghetto areas, found that "in general, those who do patronize the library come often; more than half at least once a week and roughly 25% come at least once a month".[23]

As well as presenting frequency of use for members and non-members, Lockham gives percentages of total population for each category. 20% of his sample had visited the library in the previous week, 8% in the previous fortnight and 6% in the previous month. His infrequent users (those who had visited at least once in the previous year) made up 15% of his total population.[24]

Mandfield and Hamilton-Smith, in the Melbourne study, asked two questions in order to establish frequency of use. The first was: "How many times in the last six months have you visited the local library?"[25] The second question was: "How often do you borrow books from your local library?" The results for both questions were substantially similar, and for weekly use differ quite dramatically from the overseas studies. In answer to the second question, they found that 7% of adult users borrow books at least once a week, 24% once a fortnight and 30% once a month. Those borrowing less than once a month made up 39%. They note that: "Interestingly, however, the number using a library less often than six monthly but at least annually, was too small to even register as a percentage of our sample and over half of those defined as users were relatively frequent".[26]

Thus, there is some difference between overseas studies and the only widely available Australian findings on frequency of use. Both British and American studies have shown a significant percentage of weekly users, while the Australian study found the percentage of weekly users to be small. Conversely, a much larger number of infrequent users was found by the Australian study.

Sex Differences in Library Use

Claire Lipsman found that "there does not seem to be much difference in library use by sex".[27] The profile of the library user included in the report for the National Advisory Commission on Libraries (United States), concluded that library users were more likely to be women.[28]

Groombridge, in his British study, found that 37% of the men were members, compared with 28% of the women. He concludes, however, that "this difference is not, in itself, statistically significant, and it seems reasonable to conclude that libraries have an equal appeal to men and women".[29]

In contrast to Groombridge's findings, Luckham found a slightly more frequent use by females than males.[30]

It seems from these studies that evidence on differences in library use by males and females is inconclusive.

Education, Occupational Status and Library Use

No other aspects have received more attention than these two. Every known study has shown that education has an influence on library use. Berelson in the Library's Public concluded as early as 1949 that the major correlates of reading and library use are "the education of the reader and the availability of reading resources".[31] Brown, using a phrase borrowed from Berelson, speaks of the heaviest users of the public library as coming

from a "middle-class communications elite".[32] Claire Lipsman's 1969 United States study likewise found a relation between library use and socio-conomic variables of income and education,[33] as did the research done under the sponsorship of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries.[34]

However an earlier United States survey, that by Herbert Goldhor of the Evansville Public Library, while confirming the link between education and library use, found occupation not to be a significant factor in whether or not respondents viewed the library as personally relevant.[35]

Groombridge's 1962 British survey "confirms that the length of education people have had is a very powerful prediction of whether they will also be library members".[36] In contrast to Goldhor, he also found that occupation was significant in library use.[37] The findings of the slightly later British study by Luckham show a similar trend. He found only 14% of those who left school before the age of 15 were library members, compared with 56% of those educated to the age of 19 or more.[38] Similarly, he found that 44% of the higher professional group, together with 42% of those in intermediate professional/managerial positions were library members, compared with 8% of unskilled manual workers.[39]

Reid's Melbourne study consisted of matching six Melbourne suburbs graded according to the Lancaster Jones socio-economic status scale, against the number of registered library borrowers. In the lower SES suburbs (Coburg, Footscray, Collingwood), only 11 - 12% of the total population were registered borrowers, whereas in the middle and upper class suburbs, (Camberwell/Waverley, Nunawading, Sandringham) the figure was from 39 - 43%. He notes the fact that such a study does not take into account the standard of library facilities in each suburb.[40]

Libraries and People in Melbourne confirmed the overseas findings on the importance of education and occupation. Of the selected sample, 51% of those educated to university level were library users, along with 44% of others with tertiary education. 9% of those with primary education only were library users and 23% of people with some secondary schooling. Library users included 70% of professional people, together with 56% of clerical and similar workers. In contrast, 46% of domestic workers and labourers were library users.[41]

Thus, all research has found a strong relation between education and library use. With the exception of Goldhor, all studies considered have also shown the significance of occupation.

Almost all researchers, however, point out the fact that education and socio-economic status are not the only determinants of library use. Some people from all education levels and occupations are library members. Luckham says: "They are rarely represented in proportion to their numbers in the general population, but the ratios are not firmly and irreversibly established."[42] It should be possible to make the library relevant to a larger proportion of the population.

Reasons for Library Use

Claire Lipsman found that one of the most frequent reasons for coming to the public library is to take out novels for enjoyment.[43] One of the few Australian small-scale surveys, that conducted at the Stanton Library during 1972, found that the most common reason for using the public library was as a source of general reading. The second most common reason given here was to use the library as an "information centre not otherwise available".[44] Since only four possible reasons for library

use were listed, and one, at least, of the other two was unlikely to apply to many people;* this may have influenced the results.

Luckham found that 83% of users came to borrow books for themselves, but that many use more than one service on each visit.[45] He found that level of education was related to reasons for use. 21% of those educated full-time to age 19 consulted reference books on their visit, twice the level of those leaving school before fifteen years of age. Also the more education received, the more different uses were made on each visit.[46]

The 1969 United States survey by the National Advisory Commission on Libraries concluded that most people come to the library

1) to get information on special problems (52%)
2) to borrow non-fiction (50%)
3) to borrow fiction books (46%)[47]

Virginia Mathews says "It is evident from this that the information function of the library has become at least as important as its creative reading function, especially as 'to use reference books and periodicals' was cited almost as often as the first two".[48]

In direct contrast to these findings, Zweizig cited a United States study undertaken by Rieger and Anderson. They found: "that the public library was named so seldom as an information source for the five areas of greatest information need that they did not even report libraries as one of the sources of information named".[49]

Confirming this has been the fact that Handfield and Hamilton-Smith in their Melbourne study, found that "even regular library users do not at

* The reason was: "As well as/instead of public library in another area".

this stage perceive the library as a key point for initiation of information access".[50] What they did find was that by far the most important reason for library visits was to borrow books. The only other significant reason was for reference purposes. "The number reporting any other use was quite insignificant".[51] For example, very few people reported visiting the library to attend meetings or discussions.[52]

It seems, therefore, that most research has found that the most important reason for library use is to borrow books for general reading, but that many people use more than one service on each visit. The only other significant reason for library use seems to be for reference purposes. Most studies have not supported the findings of the National Advisory Commission on Libraries and have found that most users do not see the library as a source of information for solving special problems.

Effect of Regular Study on Library Use

There is much evidence in the literature of high student use of libraries, particularly of study and reference facilities. Claire Lipsman in the United States found that "the percentage of users currently enrolled in an educational program is between 2½ - 4 times higher than that of non-users, depending upon race".[53] Luckham's British study found the very high membership rate of 62% for those involved in regular study.[54] Not surprisingly, he also found that this group made most use of reference departments.[55]

A small Australian study, A Library Usage Survey - Newcastle Reference Library, published in 1967, found that student users of reference facilities out-numbered all other groups combined, by a ratio of five to one.[56] Figures provided by the Moonee Valley Regional Library on the use of the

reference room at the Essendon Public Library and quoted by Reid confirm these findings: "... of 474 visits, 420 were by full-time students, 52 by part-time students and only two were by members of the non-student public".[57]

Thus, there seems to be a general consensus that regular study has an effect on library use, especially on the use of reference and study facilities. However, the small Australian study at the Stanton Library, found that the most frequently cited reason for borrowing educational books was for general interest and that demand for books for formal courses and business reasons was low.[58]

Reasons for Library Non-Use

The effect of education on library use or non-use has already been discussed. Lack of reading ability has an important effect but it is difficult to question people directly on this point. Groombridge in 1964 in London looked extensively at reasons why people do not use the public library. He found that nearly half of the non-members in his sample do not join libraries because "they cannot read, they do not wish to read, or they are not able to give reading a higher priority in their lives".[59] Groombridge felt this would become less of a reason as people became better educated. Libraries and People in Melbourne found that, of the non-users in the sample, 68% said that they had used a public library in the past.[60] By far the most important reason given for ceasing library use was not enough time.[61] Handfield and Hamilton-Smith interpret this as basically a priority statement "that people accord a higher priority to other time uses".[62]

Most researchers have found that an important reason for non-membership has been difficulty in obtaining desired books.[63, 64, 65.] Comfortingly, they

have not found much feeling by non-members that library staff are unhelpful,[66, 67] with the possible exception of Handfield and Hamilton-Smith who found that 17% of non-members thought library staffs to be unhelpful.[68] The British studies have found distance from the library to be of some significance.[69] However, Handfield and Hamilton-Smith, in their survey felt there was little evidence that distance from the library was an important determinant of use as has been the case in many overseas studies.[70]

It seems that the availability of other sources of books is a reason for some non-use, but perhaps particularly for infrequent use of public libraries. Luckham found that many other sources of books were used by both members and non-members. Buying of books was particularly important.[71] However, Groombridge found "that the people who do buy books in fairly large numbers and those who belong to libraries are by and large the same people".[72] And Libraries and People in Melbourne reports greater use of other libraries by adult users of the local public library than by non-users.[73]

It seems, therefore, that most researchers have found an important reason for the non-use of libraries to be the inability or unwillingness of people to give reading a higher priority in their lives. Other important reasons found have been difficulty in obtaining desired books and the availability of other sources of books. Findings on the effect of distance have differed. The local study did not find it to be important, in contrast to British studies. Unhelpful library staffs have not been found to be important.

Dissatisfaction with the Library by Frequent Users

Groombridge says that "perhaps the most obvious, because the most central,

source of dissatisfaction with public libraries would be their inability to meet demands for particular kinds of books".[74] Groombridge found some members more accepting, others more critical, of the library's inability to meet specialist or other kinds of demand either quickly or at all. Luckham found as many as 40% of members complained that desired books were unavailable[75] and Handfield and Hamilton-Smith found a remarkable 59%.[76] The latter found a persistent demand for better availability of specialist books, particularly student references. They felt that "some of the comments relating to specialist literature showed that library users were often completely ignorant of the inter-library loan system".[77] They also found a demand for library opening at weekends and a number of comments showing a positive interest in closer community involvement in library operations.[78]

Thus researchers uniformly have found the unavailability of desired books to be the most frequent criticism made by members. Several other criticisms have been made, but none of these has been found to be frequently reported.

Image of the Public Library

Lipsman in her United States study found that library users have a more favourable attitude to the library than non-users.[79] People and Libraries in Melbourne confirmed this point.[80]

However Groombridge found that most non-members of the London libraries where he carried out his survey were not hostile to the library. In fact, he found that "three in every five non-members have a favourable attitude towards public libraries".[81] Luckham found a paucity of spontaneous criticism from non-members, but feels "their lack of comment

may be an indication of apathy rather than concern".[82] One of his original hypotheses had been that there might "be a dichotomy of favourable/unfavourable image by members and non-members of the public libraries".[83] On the basis of his research he feels that the division is favourable/uncertain. He agrees with Groombridge that non-members do not perceive the public library as being wholly without merit. He feels it would be possible to create a more favourable climate of opinion towards the public library.[84]

Most researchers have found startling gaps in public knowledge about libraries. This has particularly been the case with non-members, but library members have also been found to be unaware of some services offered. Lipsman found that all the non-users who had heard of the library knew it had books, but were not well informed about other materials and activities.[85] Lockhan found responses from non-members indicated both widespread error as well as uncertainty about library services.[86]

Most researchers have also found that most people, members and non-members, have a very limited idea of the role of the library. Groombridge found the public to have meagre expectations: "a library is just a place where you change your books, and a librarian is like the girl at the supermarket checkout".[87] The Melbourne study on information needs and resources, Westudy, found that virtually all the families interviewed "had a stereotyped and traditional view of public libraries. In addition, they were likely to be misinformed about the services available".[88] Handfield and Hamilton-Smith found that most people saw the library as providing the traditional 'book oriented' service and that "current demand for public library service is limited by the general lack of awareness of

what a library can provide and what a library might provide".[89]

Information Needs

Reid in an article in Australian Library Journal in 1977 speaks of information as a basic need in contemporary Australia. He quotes the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, who in opening the 1975 Conference of the Library Association of Australia, spoke of information as a prime constituent of human freedom.[90]

The study team set up to report on community information needs in Western Australia defines information as "the raw material used in the decision-making process".[91] They feel that, "faced with choices both in day-to-day living and in crisis situations, people need good information to help them make better, more effective, aware decisions".[92] They also feel that, because of the approach taken by the media, it is easier for a man to experience the rest of the world than to be aware of information which affects his daily life.[93] The other point they make is that, knowledge of how to manipulate information tends to generate more knowledge. The class in society with this ability they label the "information wealthy". This class becomes increasingly powerful.[94]

Trask and Garlick write in a similar vein in Access and Attitude. They consider inequality of access to information as a world-wide problem and say that: "In Australia those persons or groups in the higher echelons of government, administration, education, industry, commerce or the professions have good access to information. The greater number of Australian people do not".[95]

The Melbourne Westudy also emphasises the need for access to information.

not only by the well-educated, but by all. "Through information, the individual finds roles in society, relates to communities and establishes relationships between people and materials. Given access to information, people can determine the direction of their lives".[96] An American study conducted in 19 States and 33 communities found community and information referral service to be particularly needed by ethnic minorities, the culturally different and poor.[97]

However, Dervin, a well-known United States researcher of information needs has pointed out "..., the clearest picture that emerges from research studies on information needs is that, in spite of the abundance of information available people are uninformed and are frustrated in their attempts to find information for everyday problem solving".[98] Warner et al in the United States have confirmed this problem. They feel that

> "the strongest 'impression' that emerges from the available literature is that the average United States urban resident is suffering from a large and ever-growing information crisis. The primary evidence for this contention comes from studies showing that citizens are frustrated in their attempts and are unable to get information for everyday problem solving".[99]

The Cleveland study showed that, of 90 people questioned, only six stated that all their information needs were being met, 34 felt their information needs were being met "fairly well" and 29 indicated their information needs were not being met at all.[100]

The Warner study found an enormous need for information amongst their sample. They attempted to get spontaneous mention of information needs,

but if this approach failed, possible information needs were mentioned to the respondents. They found that 80% of their sample of 1,000 people cited at least one problem/question. Of the total of 8,910 problems/questions cited, one fifth were unsolved and four-fifths were solved.[110]

Dervin, who was involved in the Ohioan study, devised with others, a scheme for coding average citizen information needs. She found needs could be divided into 10 major categories and 134 subdivisions.[111] This scheme has been tested on four data bases and has been found to work successfully.[112] Since there is a wide variety of information needs and coding presents a problem, this is an invaluable contribution to the study of information needs.

In an appendix to the Ohioan Australian study, the State Librarian of Western Australia, Mr. Gilbert Thomas pointed out the wide diversity of information needs.[113] An American study of neighbourhood information centres, conducted by Alfred Kahn and others at the Columbia School of Social Work also found a great need for information on all manner of subjects.[114]

However, Ligman found the information needs of consumers of libraries related to medical information, child care and job information. She also found that concern to employment and related information was prevalent.[115] The Ohioan study found that problems in the main areas of neighbourhood, consumer, housing and crime and safety were the most frequently cited.[116] And Martinez finds that

> "some needs cited also for by various groups reflect primarily immediate needs for library services that

relate to education problems of life- home, business, and farm management; child nutrition; health and nutrition; housing and jobs; current events and hobbies".[109]

Thus, it seems that while there is a wide range of information needs, most relate to problems of everyday living. The sampling of opinions received from the public at Williamsburg City Library made for the following thereby both confirmed this point.[110]

The Barnes study's findings regarding the information needs of various sub-groups in the community are interesting, though not surprising. They found that the young, the highly educated, those with high income, and those in professional or managerial occupations were more likely to cite problems/questions than the non-members in the sample.[111] The authors also note that: "[...] [illegible], those sub-groups of individuals who occupy the most disadvantaged positions in our society, are the least likely to articulate information or resource needs, and report more problems/questions than other individuals ...".[112] They feel that it is not reasonable to believe that those who are disadvantaged have fewer information needs, but rather that there might be other explanations. There might be an inability or unwillingness on the part of this group to articulate their needs. Or perhaps individuals who have other needs for a long period of time become so accustomed to them that they no longer consider them as problems.

Interesting, too, are the topic areas which concerned various sub-groups more than others. The area of crime and safety was mentioned as most important amongst those in upper income groups. On the other hand, the general area of housing, especially home-building was cited most frequently

by non-whites and low-income respondents.[112]

A problem with the study of information needs which has been mentioned by a number of researchers is the psychological one of how people perceive their needs. "An individual may not be aware of his information needs, or he may not be able to verbalise them. Or he may be aware of his needs, but not see them as 'information' problems".[113]

The Western Australian study sheds further light on this problem. It speaks of the complexity of society and of human beings today and the loss of a close sense of community which results. This means that "not only search for information is difficult, but knowing what information one needs to search for is also more difficult today".[114]

Thus, from the literature the importance of information needs for everyday living (or community information) is clear. The problems associated with meeting these needs also emerge. The research that has been done to date has revealed some interesting insights concerning the information needs of various sub-groups in the community.

The Library and Information

Evidence of the fact that the community does not see the library as an important source of information at this stage has already been presented. The limited view of the role of the library held by the public has also been discussed, along with the fact that, non-users especially, are misinformed about the library.

Crossbridge in his British study revealed striking evidence that more than

a third of the public was unaware of the provision of information by libraries. He found that "even 16% of library members did not think of a library as a place to find out or to be told anything".[115]

Mention has been made of the findings of Rieger and Anderson. In fact, so seldom was the library mentioned as a source of information in their study, that libraries were coded as "other" and were mentioned by less than one percent of the respondents.[116] The Warner study found that only three percent of the respondents named the library as an information source for their most important problem or question.[117] Zweizig's research also indicated that less than 5% of the respondents indicated the library as a source of information on consumer problems, housing or social issues.[118]

The findings of the Libraries and People in Melbourne have been widely quoted by others. To reiterate, this study found that "most people do not perceive the library as an important point of information access, but rather perceive it as a storage and access point for books".[119] It seems that most studies have produced the same findings on this point.

Other Sources of Information

Dervin says that "a capsule picture of the evidence suggests that most citizens in the United States live in a relatively homogeneous information environment that presents relatively little information for problem solving".[120] In addition, she believes that evidence shows that awareness of potential information sources is low and that only the highly educated elite make use of professionals and non-profit agencies, and then only to solve

problems which have reached crisis stage.[121] The Cleveland study confirmed this point, finding that little use was being made of existing community agencies which are organised primarily to provide information.[122]

Dervin also says that television is the most used and believed mass medium of the average adult, "though tangential evidence suggests that the electronic media lack the kind of information the citizen needs to help solve his everyday problems".[123]

The Warner study discusses this point and adds that "typical findings show that high print media users are the only respondents who possess accurate knowledge for decision making".[124] It is pointed out, however, that 69% of all media time is spent on radio and television, one-fourth of a waking day for the average adult.[125]

Lipsman also found that the high use of the media by her sample did not lead to their being better informed about community programs. She found friends, neighbours, and other members of the family were the main source of information in these areas.[126]

All studies have emphasised the importance of family and friends as a source of information. Dervin says that the most used sources of information on most topics are friends, family and relatives. "People meet, talk and ask advice from people especially like themselves".[127] She attempts an explanation of why private channels of information are regarded as more significant than public channels. She notes the possibility, with private channels, of evaluating the speaker providing the information, the fact that a specific question can be asked of a friend and a specific answer

gained - and the fact that the person with an information problem may require support and sympathy as much as information.[128]

Libraries and People in Melbourne confirmed that both library users and non-users "look towards members of the family or personal friends as their key point of enquiry for information".[129] Westudy found that all of the six families involved in their detailed case studies used personal friends or family as a first point of information.[130]

The Western Australian survey also confirmed this point. The comment was made that:

> "Time and again we find people turning to someone they know when on a rational basis such are not the best possible source of information ..... yet the decision to turn to friends or church as an authority on questions which they are 'not qualified' to handle is valid in emotional terms on the grounds of human feeling, feeling of belongingness, trust, personal dignity, independence".[131]

A very interesting finding of the Western Australian study is that there was a difference in answer when a hypothetical question on an information need and sources was asked, compared with the answer made in response to a question asked about an actual need. It was found that respondents nominated family and friends as the first source of information in most cases where they had actually had an information need.[132] Yet, when asked to deal hypothetically with information needs, people more often nominated professionals, government departments and private business as sources.[133]

The Warner study provided similar findings, though there was some difference. At the stage when the basic approach of the survey was being tested, anecdotes were told presenting need for information to solve a problem. It was found that agencies and newspapers were named in response. However, the altogether different answer of contacting a friend or a professional was given if the respondent had experienced a similar problem.[134] This finding differed from that of the Western Australian survey in that professionals, along with family and friends, were used most frequently as first sources.

Once again interesting findings have been obtained in relation to various sub-groups in the community and sources of information used. The Warner study found that the highly educated, those with high incomes and the young, not only expressed more information needs, but also used more sources in solving their problems. They found that, while personal contacts were important sources for all sub-groups, the "personal contacts of those who were well-educated and earning high incomes were perceived as being more 'helpful' .....".[135] In fact, this group found all sources to be more 'helpful' than those with less education and lower incomes.

Lipsman found that library users were more knowledgeable concerning community resources.[136] Libraries and People in Melbourne confirmed this finding that library users were "a little more likely than non-users to be aware of an utilize alternative sources of information".[137]

Thus, it seems that most research has shown that, when people have a need for information, they mostly turn first to family and friends. Although there are some variations in the findings, it seems that a hypothetical question on an information need is more likely to result in nomination of

an agency, a professional or the media as the first source of information. Those with higher education, higher incomes and library membership are likely to use more sources of information and to find them more helpful.

The Need for a Central Information Source

A search conference was held as part of the Western Australian study. Group two at the conference "was concerned with the problem of individuals not knowing where to look for information when there is no one place to focus such a search".[138] They felt a primary problem with information access is the complexity of information sources within the community. Group three thought there should be a central source of information within the community, but that it should not be the sole dispensing point.[139]

During the survey the Western Australian team asked respondents to estimate frequency of use if an information centre was established. They found the response staggering. 77.6% were in favour of such a centre, and 39% would use such a centre as much as every two months or more often.[140] However, it should be kept in mind that often there is a difference between people's intentions and their actual behaviour.

The Potential of the Library as an Information Centre

There have been some very successful attempts made to set up community information and referral centres in public libraries. The outstanding example is TIP (The Information Place) which is part of the Detroit, Michigan, Public Library. Clara Jones, who is director of the Detroit Public Library says that "TIP is merely an extension of the traditional librarian's role of gathering material, organising it into a collection and indexing it".[141] Two years' work went into collecting and indexing community information before the service opened, there was an extensive advertising

campaign and special staff training. The information files are constantly updated. Jones, in an interview while she was in Australia, explained why the establishment of TIP was necessary. She spoke of there never having been any one social agency that could be a first stop centre to direct people to the information which they wanted. There were many agencies giving community information, but they were unrelated to each other even if they had informal understanding and co-operation. The public library in Detroit has established a network.[142]

In Victoria, the Dandenong Valley Regional Library Service is attempting to establish a network of information sources in the Dandenong region. The name of the service is LINK and this expresses the concept of information delivery as it is seen at Dandenong Valley. The principal role is seen as co-ordination of information for the total community in the Dandenong Region in co-operation with other agencies. The other aim of the service is to provide a direct community information service.[143]

Handfield and Hamilton-Smith, who studied four different areas in Melbourne, found that the library in the City of Altona was "... demonstrating an ability to become relevant to persons outside of the normal spectrum of library users ...".[144] The residents of Altona were much more likely than those of the other areas to perceive their library as a focal point for information. Handfield and Hamilton-Smith feel that it is evident from their data "that the City of Altona library has demonstrated the possibility of libraries playing a more active information provision role".[145]

The introduction to the Cleveland study speaks of the library being in a unique position to serve the average citizen's community information needs.

It points to the relative autonomy of the library, its political neutrality, its capacity and reputation for objectivity, its commitment to rendering information services without restriction to all enquirers.[146] In addition, there are the skills librarians have in collecting and retrieving information. Robert Sharman, State Librarian of Western Australia, speaks in similar vein, but also mentions the public library's wide distribution of service points.[147]

It does seem from available research that a sizeable percentage of the community would like a citizens' advice bureau kind of service in public libraries. Luckham found that 57% favoured such a service.[148] Trask and Garlick in their New South Wales survey found that 42.2% of their sample would like an information service.[149] A survey in Manchester England, found a strong interest in the provision of community information.[150]

There are problems involved in the provision of information and referral services. The frequent need for interpretation of information is one of these. There is often a need to follow up an enquiry to make sure that a patron has actually received help. A problem which is widely discussed is that of providing an effective information and referral service, but avoiding advocacy which librarians have traditionally considered vital. Mairéad Browne feels that "many librarians have not fully come to appreciate the ramifications of information and referral ...".[151] It seems certain that for an information and referral service to be successful it must provide the right kind of environment - one which does not erect barriers and inhibit the information seeker.

It does seem that if previous non-users of the library can come to see the library as an information and referral service that it can lead these

people to use the library in other traditional ways. This has happened in Detroit.[152] Luckham found that of the replies of relevant respondents, 21% had actually taken out a book for themselves, despite originally visiting for some other purpose. He feels there are policy implications because, if people can be attracted into the building for some other primary purpose, they might be encouraged to become library borrowers.[153]

It seems true that the library has potential as an information and referral centre and that a successful library information service can lead to a larger percentage of the community being served by the library. There is no suggestion that the library can or should take over or have a monopoly of information service. There is a suggestion that the library may have a role as a much-needed co-ordinator of information services.

Need for Publicity

What is quite clear is that, if the library is to be seen as an information and referral centre, it must change its image and take positive action to do this. One way is for librarians to get out into the community, make themselves known, attend meetings of community groups. What TIP does is to send staff out on "community walks" to gather information about the community. They visit businesses, institutions, organisations, clubs and interview individuals.[154] Apart from collecting community information, this helps in publicising the services of TIP.

Mention has already been made of the fact that even library members are not always well informed of services offered. For this reason, Groombridge feels that the usefulness of members in recommending the services of the library

to their friends and neighbours is thrown into doubt.[155] He thinks that public libraries need to "... employ the public arts of publicity and promotion with an as yet untried professionalism and seriousness - they need, in short, to be audible".[156] Lipsman believes that, especially in big cities "... the promotional effort must be intense and precisely aimed; otherwise it may not be able to penetrate the conflicting din of other claims or the indifference that may characterise big-city dwellers".[157] Luckham's view is that there is substantial approval and potential demand for libraries to play a wider role, but that the extent of ignorance about present services is too great for comfort. He believes that the library has to sell itself, that it needs to go out and promote its services.[158] Because Westudy found virtually all families involved in their case studies to be misinformed about library services available, it is felt that "the development of a wider information role for library services clearly needs a massive information program, merely to convey to the community the changes in library function".[159] Handfield and Hamilton-Smith found a very high reading of local papers and feel libraries are not using them effectively.[160]

In an article in Australian Library Journal, Vivienne Ellis says that "competing in a commercially dominated environment, it is vital for the library in any community to promote itself by using the same commercial techniques as its neighbours engaged in commercial enterprise".[161]

There is evidence that such a campaign can be successful. Ann Rein, at a

meeting of the South Australian Branch of the Library Association of Australia, cited an example of a ten week social security publicity campaign on benefits for the aged, which resulted in an immediate 240% increase in applications from people unaware of benefits available.[162]

It is evident that, if the library is to change its image and begin to offer community information and referral as an important part of its service, that successful publicity will be one of the vital ingredients.

Need for Research

There is a lack of research which looks explicitly at users and non-users of public libraries. The 1967 study for the National Advisory Commission on Libraries found that the body of recorded knowledge concerned with the use of public libraries was inadequate, fragmented and not comparable; that broadly based data concerning the use of libraries were almost totally absent; that there were almost no studies of non-users.[163] In 1976 Zweizig noted that in the United States only 15 studies were available that looked explicitly at users of public libraries.[164]

Very few studies concerned with users and non-users have been carried out in Australia. In 1972 Reid said "... there is an almost complete absence of published information on the sociology of public libraries".[165] There has been some improvement in the situation since that time. The large scale study Libraries and People in Melbourne[166] has been recently published and there are a few other studies, mostly small-scale, now available.

Johnstone, who in Australian Library Journal, describes a 1972 survey of the Stanton Library in North Sydney, stresses the need in Australia for

two kinds of research into public library use: surveys on a State or national level and surveys of a local library's clientele. The facts that "the results of each can be used to complement the results of the other. Through such complementation a total profile which neither can really achieve by itself is obtained". [167]

There is also a lack of research, particularly in Australia, which concerns itself with information needs for everyday living and sources of information. It is important to measure the degree of need for information and determine the types of resources people use to obtain the information. It is also important to know how the library is seen as a source of information. Some research has been done in the United States. Westaby,[168] an investigation of the library and information needs of the people of the Western Region of Melbourne, along with the Western Australian study,[169] have made an important start to the study of information needs in Australia. Carmel Maguire has made the point that Australian people's information needs cannot be inferred from studies elsewhere and has put up a strong case for Australian library research.[170]

Aims of the Present Study

It therefore seems useful to carry out a research project in a local municipality which looks at the following questions: 1) Who uses the public library, how often do they use it and why? 2) Who does not use the library and why not? 3) What kinds of information needs for everyday living do people have? 4) How do they try to meet these needs? 5) How do people see the library in terms of their information needs? 6) How do people feel that the library can better publicise its services?

It was decided to carry out a survey in the form of questionnaire in order to answer these questions. Background information on the Kingswood district is included in the next chapter.

Two hypotheses were also examined. In specific terms it was hypothesized:

1) That at the moment, the library is not seen as an important source of community information

and

2) That people would like a centre which can be a starting point for all kinds of information.

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2. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT STUDY

Ringwood is an outer eastern suburb situated about 15 miles from the City of Melbourne. It includes part of the electoral subdivisions of Croydon West, Southwood and Warrandyte and all of the subdivisions of Heathmont and Ringwood.

The preliminary population figure for Ringwood for the 1976 census was 37,085. It included 18,285 males and 18,800 females. This represented a total population increase of 6.7% since the previous census in 1971. The separate house on its own allotment is the predominant form of housing. In 1971 only 6% of a total of 9,631 occupied dwellings were flats or villa units.

The number of families with children under the age of 16 at the 1971 census was 5,394. The total number of families, including those without children and people with grown children was 9,849. This means 54.76% of families had children under the age of 16.

In 1971, a total of 13,139 people in Ringwood were working. Table 1 shows the usual major activity, together with comparable figures for the Melbourne statistical area.

Table 1

Ringwood - Usual Major Activity of Population, 1971 Census

Major activity	Number	Percentage	MSD*
Working	13,139	37.8%	42.4%
Home duties	7,383	21.24%	20.2%
Child not yet at school	3,781	10.88%	9.8%
Child at school / full-time student	9,205	26.48%	22.8%
Other	1,243	3.57%	4.8%

From table 1 it can be seen that there were slightly larger percentages of families with children in Ringwood compared with the Melbourne statistical division.

Table 2

Ringwood - Birthplace of the Population, 1971 Census

Birthplace	Number	Percentage	MSD
Australia	27,774	79.92%	72.54%
United Kingdom and Ireland	3,915	11.26%	8.95%
Other	3,062	8.81%	18.49%

From table 2 it can be seen that while Ringwood had a higher percentage of United Kingdom migrants than the Melbourne statistical division, it had a

* The MSD percentage in tables 1 and 2 came from Handfield and Hamilton-Smith. People and Libraries in Melbourne.[1] They were not available for all the tables presented in this chapter.

lower percentage of other migrants. The number of migrants in a community is an important consideration for libraries which must try to provide a service for all groups in the community.

Table 3

Ringwood - Level of Education Completed, 1971 Census

Education level	Number	Percentage
Up to form 2	7,252	32.54%
Forms 3 and 4	7,709	34.59%
Forms 5 and 6	6,590	29.57%
Not stated	732	3.28%

It will be seen from table 3 that, of the 22,283 people in Ringwood who had completed education, 29.57% had completed either forms 5 or 6 of secondary school. The comparable percentage for the Melbourne statistical division was 25.8%. This is, in turn, reflected in the composition of the workforce. Table 4 sets out the numbers and percentages in each of three main occupation groups.

Table 4

Ringwood - Major Occupational Categories, 1971 Census

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Professional, managerial, self-employed	4,216	30.64%
Clerical, members of armed forces	3,507	25.5%
Tradesmen, process workers, domestic workers and labourers	5,361	38.99%

There was a relatively high percentage of the population in professional and managerial positions - 30.66%, compared with 18.5% for the Melbourne statistical division. However, this figure was slightly inflated because the coding scheme used by the Bureau of Census and Statistics includes shop assistants with proprietors.*

The Ringwood Library

The Ringwood Library is part of the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Library Service, the headquarters of which are located at Knox. There are five branches included in this service. Two branches are situated in the City of Knox and there is one branch each for the Cities of Ringwood and Croydon and the Shire of Healesville. In addition, there are two bookmobiles - one each for the Shires of Sherbrook and Healesville. Any member who joins at one of the branches of the service, can use his membership ticket at any of the other branches. Books can also be borrowed through inter-library loan from any of the libraries in the service or from other municipal libraries in the state.

The total bookstock for the whole region as of 22nd November, 1977 was 176,440 volumes. All classifying and cataloguing is done at Knox Headquarters. In November 1977, the Ringwood Library's bookstock was 44,000 and shelf capacity at the library has already been exceeded. There is no record collection yet, but an audio-visual section is being started. Magazines are provided. There are a variety of services offered, such as children's services, readers' advisory services and reference services.

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* For the analysis of the Ringwood survey, the coding scheme of occupations used is one developed by Leonard Broom and F. Lancaster Jones in their Opportunity and Attainment in Australia.[2] (See appendix B). The scheme used by the Bureau of Census and Statistics is much more complicated. An attempt has been made to collapse both scales so that categories are roughly equivalent.

The reference collection is mainly ready-reference, but it does specialise in medical reference books (the area of medical science is one of the Ringwood Library's specialities).

A community information file, listing community organisations and groups and giving details of their services and activities is being compiled. There are also pamphlets available on community organisations. The publications of the Ringwood Council : Ringwood Community Guide is also available. Large notice boards are used to display information on Ringwood happenings. No effort has been made to publicise the community information service, as yet. The feeling has been that the data base is not sufficiently developed. However advice or referral on the full range of community information could be provided at this stage.

The last renewal of membership for the Ringwood Library took place during 1973. In December of that year, there were 17,557 members (adult and child) which was 50.52% of the population.

Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service

Originally, this citizens' advice bureau served Ringwood only and was called Ringwood Citizens' Advisory Service. It was established in 1967. In 1975 it was extended to Croydon and became Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service (RCAS). Over the 10 years of its operation it has received 10,261 calls, requesting information and advice. The number of calls per year has been steadily increasing, the number for 1976-1977 being 1,763.

Local Papers

There are two local papers for the Ringwood area. Ringwood Croydon Mail and Ringwood Croydon Gazette. While being primarily an advertising medium, they also provide news of local organisations and happenings and a forum for local issues.

Access

Originally begun in 1973 as the Outer Eastern Regional Council for Social Development under the Australian Assistance Plan, Access has distributed over one million dollars to local groups. It has been very effective in bringing groups in the community together and has increased social awareness in the region. One publication, Neighbourhood Activity in Ringwood, includes such details as information points, baby clinics, community education facilities, local government information. Recently it has published a list of Ringwood service organisations with their addresses. It also provides a reference and advisory service and has recently established two community service boards in Ringwood. One newsletter Open Up has been published as part of both local papers.

During 1978, Access called a meeting of people concerned with information services in the region. The group, which includes a librarian from the Ringwood Library, continues to meet.

Maroondah Social Health Centre

This centre, principally concerned with mental and social health, was established in 1976. Its main functions are to provide counselling and address prevention programs. It has a resource centre which is available for use by the public.

Thus Ringwood has a number of organisations providing information services. Some of these can be described as services concerned only with information provision. Examples in Ringwood are the public library, Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service and the local papers. Others collect and disseminate information as part of their function. Examples of this second group are the Ringwood Council, Department of Social Welfare, baby health centres,

Access and Perceived Social Health Factors.

Chapter 2. Footnotes

1. Bousfield, Canon, and Stacy Hutchinson-Smith. Libraries and people in Melbourne. Melbourne : Library Council of Victoria, 1972.

2. Brook, Leonard and P. Lancaster Jones. Operations and environment in Australia. Canberra : A.N.U. Press, 1975.

The Sample

A decision was made to limit the survey to a specific group in the community. It was felt that the size of the sample which could be managed would be too small for significant results to be obtained from a broad cross-section of the community. Since a large proportion of the community in Ringwood has young children, it was decided to limit the sample to people with children under the age of 16. The sample was to be approximately 100 men and 100 women (from the same family if possible). This is approximately a .54% sample.

Since a random sample of at least 100 households with a male and female and children under the age of 16 was required, it was originally decided to take a sample of 300 from the electoral roll. The exact proportion of households with children under the age of 16 was uncertain, since the accuracy of the 1971 census figures is now questionable. It was not certain that 300 would be sufficient and all households selected would have to be visited. It was later decided to take a random sample of 400 from the electoral roll and to use random number tables.

The response rate was exceptionally high. Eleven addresses could not be found, often because no street number was given in the electoral roll. There was one unoccupied house. No one was at home at 14 addresses, despite as many as four calls made. Otherwise, there was non-response from only four households. One couple refused to communicate at all, one couple refused (giving no reason) after initially agreeing, one was a migrant couple with a language difficulty and one couple accidentally threw the questionnaires away and refused to fill in new ones. In addition, 13

males and three females from separate households refused for a number of different reasons, the main ones being disapproval of the idea of questionnaires, the feeling that privacy was being invaded, lack of time and language problems.

In all, there were 211 respondents, 105 males and 106 females. There were more single males with children which compensated for the higher non-response from males.

Table 5 sets out the education level of the respondents.

Table 5

Education Level of Respondents

Level of education	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Up to form 2	42	19.9%
Forms 3 or 4	91	43.1%
Forms 5 or 6	43	20.4%
Diploma	23	10.9%
Degree or higher	12	5.7%
Number of respondents	211	100%

There is some difference between the figures above and those of the 1971 census for education level presented in table 3. One explanation may be that accuracy of the census figures is now questionable. Another may be that the size of the Ringwood sample was relatively small and was limited to a particular group in the community. Further, those with tertiary education are included in the "forms 5 and 6" group in the census table.

Table 6 sets out the main occupation groups of the respondents.

Table 6

Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Professional, managerial, self-employed	56	41.5%
Clerical, members of armed forces, shop assistants	33	24.4%
Tradesmen, process workers, domestic workers and labourers	46	34.1%
Number of respondents	135	100%

Once again, there is some difference between the figures shown in the table and those calculated from the 1971 census and presented in Table 4. The reasons discussed above with regard to education may also apply to the occupation tables. In addition, there is the problem of the coding schemes mentioned earlier.*

The Questionnaire+

It was decided that a self-administered questionnaire would be used. It was felt that to interview 200 people, given the limited time available, would be unrealistic. It was decided that the same questionnaire would be used for males and females and that they would be marked appropriately. An attempt would be made to persuade the man and woman in each household to fill in their questionnaires independently.

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* For original Ringwood survey occupation scale see appendix B.

\+ For Ringwood questionnaire see appendix A.

Seltiz et al in Research Method and Social Relations says:

> "The more links that can be established between a given study and other studies, the greater the probable contribution. One way is to examine the research and the thinking that has already been done on the given research problem and to plan the study so that it ties in with this existing work at as many points as possible".[1]

With this in mind a number of studies were examined and several proved useful. Particularly helpful was the recently completed Melbourne study by Handfield and Hamilton-Smith. In fact, two questions, those relating to reasons for use and non-use of the public library, were based to some extent on part of one of the questionnaires included in the appendix of Libraries and People in Melbourne.[2]

A survey which was useful in the framing of the "information" questions (12,13) was the United States study of five cities by Turick.[3] While it was felt that the information subjects, as listed in that questionnaire were too vague, the initial idea for questions 12 and 13 of the present survey came from the Turick study.

The major problem in drafting the questionnaire was the design of the "information" section. In the first draft of the questionnaire there was only one, very complex "information" question. This was split into two parts, which became questions 12 and 13 in the final questionnaire. We were conscious that the questionnaire must not be too long, and yet it was difficult to frame the questions on "information" briefly, but still elicit

useful data. It would have been preferable to ask respondents first of all if they had recently required information on each of the information subjects. For those responding positively, the question of whether they went to the library for the information or what source they used could have followed. It was realised, however, that not everyone would have needed information recently on the subjects and that another question of a hypothetical nature would have to follow. No concise way of doing this could be found.

The Pilot Study

A pilot study involving 10 households was carried out on Sunday 24th July. It was decided to choose an area which appeared less affluent than the average in Ringwood as it was expected that more problems would emerge in such an area. Questionnaires were delivered to eight houses during the morning and collected later that day or on the Monday. Two households which appeared very affluent also received questionnaires.

The pilot study was to be particularly a test of whether males and females in the same household could be persuaded to fill in their questionnaires independently. It seemed that we were successful in this regard in that husbands and wives appeared not to have compared their answers at the time of filling in their questionnaires.

As a result of the pilot study, changes were made to options of answering the questions on reasons for use or non-use of the library - finally to become questions 4 and 6. For the pilot study, only frequent library users were permitted to answer the first of these two questions. Infrequent or non-users filled in the second of the two, which concerned reasons for infrequent or non-use. The feeling was that infrequent users

also wanted to state the reasons why they did use the library sometimes. A change was made so that infrequent users filled in both these two questions, thus stating the two aspects of their position. There was also the feeling on the part of some frequent users that they would like to express their criticisms of the Ringwood Library. As a result, question 5 concerning satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Ringwood Library was added.

The other important change was in the first of the "information" questions (number 12). Some respondents felt the sequence of sections in this question was illogical. The order of the second and third columns was therefore reversed so that "Do you think that the library would be able to give you information or advice on the subject?" came before "Would you go to the library for information on the subject?"

Procedure

The questionnaire was self-administered. Delivery and collection of questionnaires took place mainly during weekends. The total number of households visited was 266.

While no pressure was put on people to fill in the questionnaire, respondents who appeared willing were often visited several times, if it was found that they had not completed the questionnaire by the time they had originally specified. An effort was made to persuade people to complete the whole of the questionnaire and, in most cases, this was successful.

The data were coded for computer analysis, which was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.[4] The analysis was concerned mainly with obtaining frequency distributions and cross-tabulations of variables. In the case of cross-tabulations, the chi-square test was

generated by the computer program. In accordance with standard procedure, a statistically significant relationship between two variables was considered to exist if the probability of error was less than .05%.

It was found that the usefulness of some of the cross-tabulations was reduced by the large number of possible combinations. In the cases of frequency of use, education, occupation and sources of information, cells were collapsed, so that data generated were more useful.

Chapter 3. Footnotes

1. Selltiz, Claire et al. Research methods in social relations. London : Methuen, 1965. p.44.

2. Handfield, Carey and Elery Hamilton Smith. Libraries and people in Melbourne. Melbourne : Library Council of Victoria, 1975. p.181-182.

3. Turick, Dorothy Ann. A proposal to research and design criteria for the implementation and establishment of a neighbourhood information centre in five public libraries in five cities : Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Queensborough; final report. Cleveland, Ohio : U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare; Office of Education; Bureau of Libraries and Learning Resources, 1973. Appendix 1.

4. Nie, N. et al. S.P.S.S. Statistical package for the social sciences. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

4. RESULTS

The Ringwood survey produced the following results which are presented together with some discussion.

Library Membership and Library Use

It was found that very few people were unaware of the Ringwood Library's existence. Only 11 out of the sample of 211 (5.2%) said they did not know that there is a public library in Ringwood. At least some of these were newcomers to the area.

A very high 57.8% claimed that they had a borrower's ticket for the Ringwood Library. The problems associated in equating library use with library membership have already been discussed. In fact it was found that 55% of the sample did use the library, though only 26.1% were frequent users. And, confirming Groombridge's findings[1] but, in contrast to Luckham's[2] there was very little use made of the library by people who were not registered members. Only two non-members were found to be frequent users and only seven non-members came into the infrequent group.

As discussed earlier, there are problems involved with official membership figures. There has been no renewal of membership for the Ringwood Library since 1973 so that there can be no possibility of an accurate record at this stage.

Frequency of Use

Taking the definition of frequent use as being at least monthly, it was found that not quite half of the users of the Ringwood Library are frequent users. Table 7 sets out frequency of use of members, non-members and the total sample.

Table 7

Relationship of Public Library Membership to Frequency of Use

Frequency of use	Members	Non-members	All adults
Once per week	3.4%		1.9%
Once per fortnight	14.6%	1.3%	9.0%
Once per month	25.4%	1.3%	15.2%
Once per six months	27%	1.3%	16.1%
Sometimes	17.2%	7.7%	12.8%
Never	12.3%	88.5%	39.8%
Not applicable			5.2%
Number of respondents	122	78	211

Contrary to the findings of Lipsman's study, it was not found that the majority of library patrons made weekly library visits.[3] These findings are also in contrast to those in Britain of Groombridge and Luckham who found that an overwhelming majority of members (83%[4] and 84%[5] respectively) were frequent users. In particular, weekly use in Ringwood is shown to be in sharp contrast to the findings of others. Groombridge found that 28% of members came at least once per week and 32% once per fortnight.[6] In Ringwood the figures for members are only 3.4% and 14.6%. Expressed in another way, it was found in Ringwood that only 1.9% of the total sample visited once per week. In contrast, Luckham's figure was 20%. On the other hand, in Ringwood, 15.2% of the sample visited once per month, compared with Luckham 6%. There was also a much larger number of infrequent users in Ringwood (28.9%, compared with Luckham 15%).[7]

Overall, the findings of the Ringwood survey are closer to those of Mandfield and Hamilton-Smith who, in their Melbourne survey, found only 7% borrowed books once per week.[8] Their finding that over half their users were relatively frequent comes close to the Ringwood result of 47.4%. This is one of the areas where local studies have produced similar results in contrast to overseas findings. It will be interesting to see if further Australian studies confirm this difference.

Use of the Ringwood Library by a Minority

It can be seen from the figures presented above - particularly in regard to library membership - that library use in Ringwood compares more than favourably with findings from most other surveys. The number of people claiming to be library members was high - 57.8%, compared with the membership rates found by Groombridge[9] and the National Advisory Commission on Libraries in the United States,[10] which are both 30%. The Victorian average in 1972 was also just under 30%.[11] The Ringwood figure also compares very favourably with even the best result, in the Melbourne survey (38% use for Camberwell).[12]

However, if frequency of use is considered, the picture is not quite so bright. More than half the users of the Ringwood Library in the survey were infrequent users and 23.3% used the library less frequently than once in six months.

Sex Differences in Library Use

It was found that more females than males were very frequent users, but overall there was no significant difference in use by males and females.

This result basically confirms other findings on this variable. Most other studies have failed to find any significant difference between men and women in library use.

Education, Socio-Economic Status and Library Use

Findings on the relation between education and library use confirm those of overseas and other Australian surveys. In fact, the percentage of those claiming to be library members in Ringwood far exceeds Barrett Reid's 39-43% for middle and upper class suburbs[13] (and it can be said that Ringwood is this type of suburb).

Table 8 shows frequency of use of two education groups: those educated to intermediate secondary level or below and those with higher secondary or tertiary level education.

Table 8

Frequency of Use by Level of Education

Frequency of use	Group educated to levels up to intermediate secondary	Group with higher secondary or tertiary education
Once per week or once per fortnight	9.8%	14.3%
Once per month	18.6%	24.7%
Once per 6 months	11.4%	26.0%
Sometimes	12.2%	15.6%
Never	36.1%	19.5%
Number of respondents	123	77

Especially noteworthy is that 36.1% of those in the lower level group never used the library, compared with only 19.5% of the higher level group. In all user categories, larger percentages of those with higher level education appear.

The cross-tabulation of two slightly different education groups - those with

tertiary education and those without - and frequency of use give very similar results. In fact, only 3.7% of those with tertiary education never used the library.

Most studies, with the exception of that by Goldhor of the Evansville Public Library[14] have found occupation also to be a significant factor in library use. Once again, these findings are confirmed in the Kingswood survey. Table 9 shows frequency of use for three occupation groups, which roughly correspond to higher, middle and lower levels. Group 1 includes professionals, managers and self-employed, group 2 includes people with clerical jobs, members of the armed forces and police and shop assistants and group three consists of tradesmen, process workers, drivers, domestic workers and labourers.

Table 9

Frequency of Use by Occupation

Frequency of use	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Once per week or once per fortnight	17%		4.8%
Once per month	22.6%	23%	11.9%
Once per 6 months	24.5%	18.6%	4.8%
Sometimes	11.3%	9.4%	16.7%
Never	24.5%	46.9%	61.9%
Number of respondents	53	32	42

From table 9, the sharpest difference is seen for people who never used the library. Only 24.5% of the upper occupation group never used the library, compared with 61.9% of the group 3 which includes tradesmen, process workers, domestic workers and labourers.

Reasons for Library Use

Table 10

Reasons for Library Use

Reasons for library use	Percentage of users
Study purposes	[illegible]
Reference purposes (self)	[illegible]
Reference purposes (children)	[illegible]
To read books and magazines	[illegible]
To borrow books (for self)	[illegible]
To borrow books (for children)	[illegible]
To find information about problems	[illegible]
To attend meetings	[illegible]
Other	[illegible]
Number of respondents	[illegible]

In answering the reasons for use question, respondents could tick more than one box. Therefore percentages do not add up to 100%.

From Table 10 it can be seen that the most important reason given for using the Ringwood Library was very definitely to borrow books. This confirms the findings of most other research - for example, that of Penfield and Hamilton-Smith.[13]

The percentage is not as high as Lockheed's 81%[14] (though the percentage may have been as high or higher if borrowing for self and for children had not been separate items on this list. One borrows would be involved in both kinds of borrowing). Since respondents were permitted to tick more than

[illegible] and many did so - is in close [illegible], just as Lockhart found, many use them now not service. Use of the library for reference purposes appears to be a significant reason, as Bamfield and Hamilton-Pennington also found.[17]

The percentage of those who used the library to find information about problems is remarkably low. It seems that Kluger and Anderson's United States findings[18] apply very much to England. Bamfield and Hamilton-Pennington appear to be correct in their belief that "even regular library users do not at this stage perceive the library as a key point for initiation of information access".[19] Also as Bamfield and Hamilton-Pennington found, very few people reported using the meeting rooms at the library.[20]

Although 31.5% of those with secondary education used the library for reference purposes, compared with 16.8% of those without, this difference is not statistically significant.* The only significant difference in reasons for use between the two education groups was in book borrowing for children. 60.4% of those with secondary education reported this as a reason for use, compared with 37.3% of those with primary or secondary education only.

Effect of Regular Study on Library Use

Lipman's finding was that "the percentage of users currently enrolled in an educational program is between [illegible] - 4 times higher than that of non-users, depending upon race".[21] This was not borne out in England, but Lipman's sample included younger people as well as adults. It was found in England that those involved in regular study were more often library users. Table 11 shows frequency of use in relation to regular study.

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* For all chi-square values and significance levels see appendix 1.

Table 11

Frequency of Use by Regular Study

Frequency of use	Those involved in regular study	Those not involved in regular study
Once a week	0%	2.2%
Once a fortnight	16%	7.3%
Once a month	24%	13.5%
Once in six months	36%	12.9%
Sometimes	16%	12.4%
Never	8%	43.5%
Not applicable		
Number of respondents	25	178

The very low 8% of non-members involved in regular study more than confirms Luckham's British finding of a 62% membership rate for those involved in a study program.[22] However it was not found in Ringwood that those involved in regular study made most use of the library for reference purposes.[23] But a significantly larger percentage of this group used the library for study purposes - 34.8%, compared with 14% of those not involved in regular study.

Reasons for Infrequent and Non-Use of the Library

The most important reason given for infrequent or non-use of the Ringwood Library was the buying or borrowing of books. Only a slightly higher percentage of infrequent library users reported this as a reason. This is surprising in the light of Groombridge's findings that people who buy books in fairly large numbers and those who belong to libraries are by and large the same people.[24]

Although 61.1% of those with tertiary education gave this to be a reason for infrequent or non-use, compared with 40.7% without tertiary education, this is not statistically significant.

The percentage of infrequent users who used another library was significantly higher - 24.1%, compared with 3.6% of non-users. This confirms the findings of Handfield and Hamilton-Smith on this point.[25] Those with tertiary education were much more likely to be users of other libraries - 33.3%, compared with 8.9% of those without tertiary education; and 29% of group 1 occupation group (the professionals and managers), compared with 2.9% of group 3 (tradesmen, process workers, domestics, labourers). A very high 66.7% of those engaged in regular study used another library, compared with 5.7% of those not in a study program.

Once again, respondents could tick more than one reason - and many did so. Table 12 sets out the percentage of each group - infrequent users and non-users - as well as the total, who responded positively to each reason.

Table 12

Reasons for Infrequent or Non-Use of the Library

Reasons for infrequent or non-use	Infrequent Users	Non-users	Total
Use another library	24.1%	3.6%	12%
Buy or borrow books	46.6%	41%	43.3%
No time to read	37.9%	35.7%	36.6%
Not interested in reading	5.2%	11.9%	9.2%
Distance from library	5.2%	6%	5.6%
No transport	1.7%	8.3%	5.6%
Kinds of books and magazines desired are unavailable	8.6%	3.6%	5.6%
Kind of information desired is unavailable	10%	3.6%	9.9%
Total satisfaction from TV and newspapers	3.6%	21.4%	16.2%
Library has too many rules and regulations	-	-	-
Library staff unhelpful	1.7%		.7%
Other	5.2%	13.1%	9.9%
Number of respondents	58	84	142

It was also surprising that a slightly higher percentage of infrequent users reported "no time to read" as a reason. It was expected that more non-users would be unable "to give reading a higher priority in their lives",[26] since infrequent users have, in most cases, made an effort to join the library. However, education level was important here. 43.8% of those educated to intermediate secondary level gave "no time to read" as a reason, compared with 21.7% of those with higher secondary or tertiary education. A slightly

higher percentage of non-users than infrequent users reported no interest in reading. If it is assumed that different people ticked these two reasons (and we cannot be sure of that), then we come close to Groombridge's finding that nearly half of the non-members in his sample do not join libraries because "they cannot read, they do not wish to read, or they are not able to give reading a higher priority in their lives".[27] In the Ringwood case, this is almost equally applicable to infrequent users.

The reason of unavailability of desired books does not appear to have been as important as other researchers have found. Slightly more infrequent users than non-users reported it as a reason. Later, it will be seen that frequent library users often found this a problem.

A higher percentage reported the unavailability of information required. Statistically significant was the difference between infrequent and non-users here - 19% compared with 3.6% - and between those with tertiary education (27.8%) and those without (7.3%), who felt this was a reason. A very high 53.3% of those who were studying regularly believed the library did not have the kind of information they needed, compared with only 4.9% of those not studying. It would seem that it is mainly those who are involved in study programs who are dissatisfied with information availability at the library. The feeling is that, for most others, the library's information role is unimportant.

As most other studies have found, unhelpful library staff and rules and regulations have little importance. It is perhaps to the Ringwood Library's credit that only 0.7% found the library staff to be unhelpful - and that one person was someone doing regular study. Confirming the findings of Handfield and Hamilton-Smith,[28] distance from the library does not appear to be an important factor in infrequent or non-use.

Non-users gained satisfaction from television and newspapers more often than infrequent users, though this was not statistically significant. As would be expected no one with tertiary education reported this as a reason.

Thus, it seems that most reasons for infrequent or non-use of the library relate to personal factors, rather than dissatisfaction with, or hostility to, the library.

Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction with the Library by Frequent Users

75% of frequent users were satisfied with the Ringwood Library, while 25% were not. Generally, it was those with higher education levels who were less satisfied. 85.2% of those educated to intermediate secondary level were satisfied, compared with 66.1% of those with higher secondary or tertiary qualifications. Perhaps the better educated are more critical because they have higher expectations of the library service. Also statistically significant was the high 32% of those doing regular study who were not satisfied, compared with 10.7% of those not involved in a study program.

Those who were not satisfied were asked to write down their reasons. In keeping with the findings of other researchers, overwhelmingly the most important criticism (from 25 people) was the unavailability of specialist or other desired books. Some of these criticisms related to insufficient choice of fiction. Others related to out-of-date reference books in popular areas, and many to gaps in areas of specialist interest. Undoubtedly many who are studying gave the latter reason. As Handfield and Hamilton-Smith pointed out, libraries do have problems in meeting the demands of people with specialist interests.[29] The extent to which people were unaware of inter-library loans cannot be gauged. However, two people

complained about the excessive wait for inter-library loan books.

Other criticisms concerned the organisation of the collections (5); the difficulty of the catalogue (3); poor public relations (2); the lack of a record library (1); the lack of an audio-visual section (1) - soon to be rectified. Two people would like to see more community participation and two think the library should be open for all or part of the weekend. One person would like to see more use of the library for hobbies and another feels there should be more involvement of schools.

Particularly interesting were the comments about the failure of the library to publicise its services, probably precipitated by the questionnaire. Some library users were surprised to find that they were unsure of whether the library could supply information on advice on problems of everyday living.

The results relating to general use or non-use of the library having been dealt with, the next part of the analysis relates to information needs for everyday living, how the library is seen as a source of information for those needs and what other sources are used to meet information needs. It also concerns the question of the need for one centre to be available as a starting point for information, and the publicity needed for the library's services.

Information Needs

Table 13 sets out the number and percentage of respondents who needed information during the previous 12 months for each of the listed information subjects.

Table 13

Need for Information During the Past 12 Months*

Information subject	Number	Percentage
a) Government	29	13.7%
b) Employment	20	10.1%
c) Child care	17	8.1%
d) Local clubs and organisations	24	11.6%
e) Welfare	13	6.2%
f) Consumer products	36	17.2%
g) Legal aid	18	8.5%
h) Education services	15	7.1%
i) Housing	24	11.4%
j) Hobbies	34	16.4%
k) Health care services	25	11.8%
l) Counselling	5	2.4%

From table 13, it can be seen that only a small number of respondents had experienced a need for information for each of the listed subjects during the previous 12 months. The information needs which were cited most frequently were for the areas of consumer products and hobbies. This result can perhaps be explained by the middle class nature of Ringwood. On the other hand, as a result of the findings of Warner et al,[30] that the highly educated and those with high incomes express more information needs, it would be expected that there would be a fairly high percentage expressing need for information in Ringwood. Perhaps part of the answer lies in the problem mentioned earlier of how people perceive their needs.[31] Perhaps

* Variations in percentages are due to variations in response rates.

some people were unaware that they did have an information need in one or more of the listed categories during the previous year or had forgotten by the time they filled in the questionnaire.

Confirming the findings of the Warner study concerning the influence of education on the expression of information needs, it was found with every one of the 12 listed subjects that those with tertiary education more frequently expressed a need for information. However, in some cases the results were very similar, especially in the areas of legal aid, counselling, health, welfare and government. The areas of greatest difference were local clubs and organisations, consumer products, education and hobbies. In one case only was the difference statistically significant - that of consumer products, where 37.1% of those with tertiary education had experienced a need for information, compared with only 13.2% of those without tertiary education.

Given that those with higher education more frequently express need for information, it seems that education level may have some effect on areas of information need considered important.

Frequent library users expressed greater need for information on local clubs and organisations, hobbies and consumer products and infrequent and non-users experienced more need for information on subjects associated with welfare. This result confirms the findings of Lipsman for library non-users.[32] For example, 13.8% of infrequent and non-users expressed need for information on housing and health care service, compared with 1.8% of frequent users (the percentages for the two subjects were the same) and this difference was statistically significant. On the other hand, 27.8% of frequent library users had needed information on hobbies (an area more traditionally associated with libraries), compared with 12.7% of infrequent

and non-users. This is interesting, given the established relationship between education, occupation and library use, though it is in no way conclusive. It also perhaps confirms the possibility of attracting non-users to the library if the community can come to see it as a place which can supply information for everyday living.

The Library and Information

The respondents were asked if they thought that the library would be able to give them information or advice on the 12 listed information subjects. Table 14 sets out the number and percentages who answered "yes" to that question.

Table 14

Image of the Library as a Supplier of Information

Information subjects	Number	Percentage
a) Government	130	61.6%
b) Employment	53	25.2%
c) Child care	71	33.8%
d) Local clubs and organisations	90	42.7%
e) Welfare	46	21.8%
f) Choosing consumer products	74	35.1%
g) Legal aid	67	31.8%
h) Education	106	50.2%
i) Housing	36	17.1%
j) Hobbies	145	69.4%
k) Health care services	53	25.1%
l) Counselling	49	23.2%
Number of respondents	211	

The results for this question were, in some ways, heartening. As libraries have traditionally been seen as a source of information on hobbies, it was not surprising that this subject scored the highest "yes" percentage. The high percentages for government and education were rather more unexpected. It is gratifying to find that as many as 42.7% thought the library would have information or advice on local clubs and organisations. However, the percentages, who thought the library would have information or advice for most of the subjects associated with welfare were relatively low, though perhaps not as low as might have been expected.

The fact that a "don't know" box was not included for this question, may have had some effect on the results. Many people said they were unsure of how to answer in the case of some of the information subjects and had made a guess. The addition of a "don't know" box would have been an improvement for this question.

However, it can be said that the findings above do confirm the fact that most people have a limited view of the role of the library. That impression was received strongly by those involved in collection and distribution of the questionnaires. Comments were often made which showed disbelief that the library could provide information or advice on most of the subjects listed. One woman, in fact, refused to fill in the questionnaire on the grounds that it was pointless as a library does not have that kind of information.

In the case of almost all information subjects, library members were more likely to believe that the library could offer information or advice. However, for one subject only was the difference statistically significant, 45.1% of library members believed the library could offer information or

advice on consumer products compared to 24.4% of non-members.

Thus, the findings of other researchers that library users are better informed about other materials and services (apart from books) offered by the library, were confirmed. Also confirming the findings of people like Crowbridge,[33] it was found that not all library members know of the services which are available in the area of community information.

For every subject, except one, those with a higher level of education believed the library could supply information or advice more frequently than those in the lower education group. These findings applied to a comparison of those with tertiary education and those without, as well as to a comparison of those with higher secondary or tertiary education and those educated to intermediate level only. Statistically significant was the difference between the 80% of those with tertiary education who believed that the library could supply information or advice on government and the 36% of those without tertiary education. A remarkable 71.4% of those with tertiary education believed the library could supply information or advice on consumer products, compared with only 27.8% of the other group. This was statistically significant.

It is interesting to see the contrast in the percentages of those who believed that the library could provide information or advice on each of the listed subjects and those who would actually go to the library for information or advice. Table 15 shows the number and percentages of the sample who would go to the library for information or advice on the listed subjects.

Table 13

Respondents Who Would go to the Library for Information

Information subjects	Number	Percentage
a) Government	79	37.6%
b) Employment	22	10.5%
c) Child care	41	19.5%
d) Local clubs and organizations	42	20.0%
e) Welfare	24	11.4%
f) Choosing consumer products	19	9.0%
g) Legal aid	37	17.6%
h) Education	58	27.6%
i) Housing	17	8.1%
j) Hobbies	200	95.2%
k) Health care services	24	11.4%
l) Counselling	23	11.0%

In most cases, only about half those who thought that the library could have information or advice on each of the subjects would actually go to the library for that information or advice. This may show that some of those who answered "yes" to the first question, were in fact, doubtful. On the other hand, many people who believed that the library would be able to offer information or advice, may have felt that other sources would be better.

There seems no doubt that, at this stage, the majority of the people of Ringwood do not see the library as a centre for information for most areas

of everyday living. However, the results are not entirely negative and are more encouraging than most other studies have found.

Other Sources of Information

The results for the question concerned with other sources of information were complicated by the fact that most people, though by no means all, mentioned at least one other source which they might use for information on the listed subjects. Table 26 sets out the most popular sources for each of the 12 information subjects, the numbers who would use those sources and the percentages of the sample. The percentages do not add up to 100% because more than one source could be mentioned.

Table 26

Other Sources of Information

Information subject	Source	Number	Percentage
a) Consumer	Borough Council	111	55.5%
	Local MP	87	43.5%
	Consumer Association	66	33.0%
	RCAS*	39	19.5%
b) Employment	Town Hall	109	54.5%
	Employment Association	136	68.0%
	Employment Bureau	87	43.5%
	RCAS	32	16.0%
c) Child care	Borough Council	119	59.5%
	RCAS	99	49.5%
	MIND**	38	19%
	Family, Friends	37	17.5%
d) Local clubs and organisations	Borough Council	96	48.0%
	RCAS	81	40.5%
	Family,Friends	69	34.5%
	Town Hall	31	15.5%
e) Welfare	Consumer Association	170	85.0%
	RCAS	34	17.0%

* RCAS stands for Borough Croydon Advisory Service which is a Citizens' Advice Bureau.

** MIND Mannesmann Social Health Centre

Information subject	Source	Number	Percentage
(f) Consumer products	Mass media Family, friends Other	100 76 9	55.76 37.48 10.76
(g) Legal aid	Solicitor Other Consumer Advocate	100 56 68	75.00 55.76 55.00
(h) Education	Consumer Advocate Pressure Group Other Family, Friends	100 72 56 57	90.00 720 72.00 720
(i) Housing	Mass media Other Pressure Group Family, Friends Telephone Directory	100 66 66 60 60	55.10 660 66.66 66.70 60.00
(j) Utilities	Other Family, Friends Mass media Access	100 66 55 50	660 72.00 66.00 66.00
(k) Health	Local Doctor Pressure Group Other Other Family, Friends	100 80 80 80 80	80.00 80.00 80.00 80.00 80.00
(l) Unemployment	Other Pressure Other Consumer Advocate	100 80 80 80	80.00 80.00 80.00 80.00

As can be seen, the mass media were the most important source for three subjects. In light of statements made by Harris[36] and Garner,[3] that the electronic media lack the kind of information that the citizen needs to help solve the every day problems, it is to be hoped that it is print media, rather than the electronic media, which are most used. Pressure Groups was the most important source also for three subjects, government departments, Other and professionals were the most popular sources for two subjects

each. Family and friends were not nominated as first choice for any subject. They were second choice for two subjects.

In this regard, the findings are not consistent with the findings of other surveys, which have found family and friends to be the most important source of information for most subjects and government departments and agencies to be low on the list of priorities. The exception is the case of the Western Australian study where similar results to those of the Ringwood study were obtained from the hypothetical questions asked. This survey found family and friends were not nominated as the most important source for eight hypothetical questions asked and were the second most important source in the case of one subject only. Professionals, in particular, and agencies were nominated as the most important sources in the case of the hypothetical questions.[36] A result in direct contrast was obtained where there had been an actual information need.

Since, for most people in the Ringwood survey, the question on sources was hypothetical, the results were analysed to see if there was any difference between the responses to this question where the respondents had experienced an actual need for information during the previous 12 months.

For almost all information subjects, a higher percentage of those who had experienced the need for information would use family and friends as a source of information than the percentage of the group that had not had a need for information. Mostly, however, the difference between the two groups was not very great. In the case of some subjects, namely employment, child care, local clubs and organisations, consumer products, education and housing, a higher percentage of those who had had a need would use the media as a source compared with the group which had not had a need for information.

The case of the subject, legal aid, is an interesting one. Popular sources for this subject were a solicitor, Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service and a government department. Higher percentages of those who had not experienced need for information on legal aid would use a solicitor and a government department. In contrast, a larger percentage of those who had needed information on this subject would use Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service, compared with the group which had not experienced a need. This was also the case with Maroondah Social Health Centre. Both are very appropriate sources of information for that subject. In fact Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service was nominated by a higher percentage of those who had experienced a need for information for several subjects. For the subjects, local clubs and organisations, education and hobbies, higher percentages of the group in each case which had needed information nominated Access as a source. For two subjects, child care and health, Ringwood Council was nominated by a higher percentage of those who had not experienced a need for information, compared with the group which had had a need.

It does seem that there was some difference in the sources which would be used by those who had experienced an information need and those sources which people who had not had a recent need think they would use. In keeping with the findings of others, family and friends were a more important source for those who had had a need for information in the previous 12 months. The media were also important to this group in the case of some subjects, as was Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service and Access. It must be noted that any conclusion can only be tentative, since the differences between the two groups were not always very marked. It seems that Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service is a highly regarded source of information in the area.

It was the most important source for two subjects and the second most important source for five other subjects. It was also a source often nominated by a higher percentage of those who had actually needed information. It is also interesting to note that Access and Maroondah Social Health Centre had some recognition as sources of information, though it seems the role of the latter was misunderstood by some people.

The cross-tabulation of education with sources of information confirmed the findings of the Warner study that those with higher education use more sources of information.[37] In every case, a larger percentage of those without tertiary education nominated no second source of information. Usually there was a remarkable difference between the two groups. It is not possible to know if those with higher education found their sources of information more helpful.

Need for a Central Information Source

The question was asked "Would it be useful to you if there was one centre, for example, the public library, which was able to supply all kinds of information which you might need?" An overwhelming majority of 89% answered that they would like such a centre. 84% said they would use such a centre if there was one. These results more than confirm those of the Western Australian study. In addition, 87% of the Ringwood sample felt that they would like to be able to phone into the centre for information.

There seems no doubt that people would like to know that there is at least one place in the community which is a starting point for information.

Need for Publicity

80.5% of the sample believed that the library could better publicise its

services. There were two frequently mentioned suggestions as to how this could be done. The most popular suggestion was that greater use be made of the local papers. (Some use is being made at this stage). This is interesting in light of the findings of Handfield and Hamilton-Smith that there was a very high reading of local papers amongst their sample and their feeling that libraries were not using them effectively.[38] The other frequent suggestion was the inclusion of library publicity with rate notices. The problem with this is that only those paying rates will gain benefit. However it is worth consideration.

What does come through clearly is that a large majority of people did believe that the library could better publicise its services. As mentioned earlier, clearly some library users were even unsure as to whether the library could give information or advice on some of the listed information subjects. This confirms the findings of other researchers that a large proportion of the community is not well-informed about the services offered by the library. The doubt that many people felt in answering the question on information and the library may have prompted some people who had previously felt themselves well-informed about the library to believe that better publicity was needed.

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5. DISCUSSION

The results of the Ringwood survey confirm the findings of overseas and local studies at many points. As mentioned at the outset, there has been little research done on library use in Australia. The one widely available and extensive Australian use study, Libraries and People in Melbourne[1] provided findings which did not always confirm overseas research. The Ringwood study has produced similar results to the Melbourne study in some areas. The differences which do appear between the results of local and overseas research may be due to social or cultural differences. Of course, it is difficult to be conclusive, when so little research on library use has been done in Australia.

The findings on information needs and sources do not mirror closely those of overseas and other Australian research. The reason may lie in the difference in the types of questionnaires used, especially in the use of hypothetical questions in the present survey.

The definition of the term "information" remains a problem. The Western Australian study on information needs defines information as "the raw material used in the decision-making process".[2] For the Ringwood study this definition basically was adopted. It was felt that an adequate definition of "community information" is "the raw material used in making decisions for everyday living".

The Hypotheses

The first hypothesis that the present study set out to examine was that, at the moment, the library is not seen as an important source of community information. The evidence from the research tends to support

this hypothesis. While more than 50% of the sample thought the library would have information or advice on three of the twelve listed information subjects, the percentages who thought the library would have information or advice on most of the subjects associated with welfare were relatively low. In most cases, only about half those who thought the library would have information or advice on each of the subjects said that they would actually go to the library for that information or advice. The majority of the people of Ringwood appear not to see the library as a centre for information for most areas of everyday living at this stage.

The second hypothesis, that people would like a centre which can be a starting point for all kinds of information, was also strongly supported by the evidence. An overwhelming majority (89%) felt they would like such a centre. The percentage of those who thought they would use such a centre was almost as large. Although there is often a discrepancy between people's intentions and their actual behaviour, the extent of the support for the concept of a centre to supply all kinds of information was impressive.

The Library's Potential as an Information Centre

Although the library was not seen as an important source of information for everyday living, the results are not entirely negative and are more encouraging than those obtained by most other studies. Even for the welfare-associated information subjects, on average between 20 and 30 percent of the sample believed the library could supply information or advice.

The literature indicates that the library has potential as an information centre. Not only do librarians have skills in collecting and retrieving

information, but the library already has a commitment to rendering information services without restriction to all inquirers. Public libraries, as in Ringwood, are usually centrally located. There appears to be no insurmountable barrier to the library becoming an effective information centre.

What is clear, however, is that a change in the image of the public library is needed. Overseas and other Australian research has found that the attitude to the library of most non-users is not hostile, but that both members and non-members have a very limited idea of the role of the library believing it to be principally a book-lending service. This has been confirmed in Ringwood. To change the image of the library will not be easy. Positive action on all levels will be needed. Librarians must emerge from their libraries, get out into the community and make themselves known. Every available medium of publicity needs to be used.

Implications for the Ringwood Library

For the Ringwood Library, the implications of the results are encouraging, provided that the library feels that the time and effort required to establish a community information centre are warranted. The library already has a larger than average membership. Although its image in the community largely is a traditional one, the overwhelming majority of people appear not to have a negative attitude towards it. Reasons for non-use related more to personal factors, than to dissatisfaction with, or hostility towards the library. Since infrequent and non-users of the library more frequently cited information needs in areas associated with welfare (for example housing and health care services) rather than in areas more traditionally associated with libraries (for example hobbies), it seems that library use could be increased still further if the

community would come to see it as a centre for information for everyday living.

This is not to suggest that the library should or could have a monopoly on information. Undoubtedly a variety of sources of information are needed in a diverse community. But usually there is no widely recognised first stop centre to direct people to the information they require. And, at the moment, there is a lack of co-ordination of information services in most communities, including Ringwood. There is scope for the library to establish itself as a recognised centre which can be a starting point for all kinds of information. There is also scope for the library to initiate information co-ordination in co-operation with other agencies, as is being done in Dandenong Valley.

Limitations, Future Research, Conclusions

Some limitations of the present research have already been mentioned. The problems in framing the questionnaire to avoid hypothetical questions on information needs where possible, have been discussed. The form of the questionnaire also provided the respondents with no opportunity to express a need for information beyond the listed areas. The issue of information needs is worthy of detailed exploration in the future, possibly using the Warner approach of attempting to elicit information needs unaided at first.[3] The coding problem involved may be solved using the scheme developed by Dervin which was discussed earlier.[4]

The question relating to other sources of information presented a problem in that respondents could fill in one or both squares provided and could add further sources if required. Some people did nominate more than two sources. It was not possible to code these In addition, if two or

more sources were given, it was not possible to know which was regarded as more or most important. How the library was regarded in relation to other sources could not be gauged. This was anticipated, but as mentioned earlier, no concise way of achieving this could be found. The area of information sources also warrants further exploration, possibly by more ambitious research studies. The present study provided a preliminary investigation of what sources are used by which individual citizens. Some interesting findings emerged, but this issue is far from settled. Other related aspects which deserve investigation are the characteristics of the sources being used, the reasons why individuals use particular sources and the relative helpfulness of sources as seen by individual citizens.

The final limitation of the present study relates to the sample. Because it was felt that the size of the sample would be too small for significant results to be obtained from a broad cross-section of the community, it was decided that the survey should be limited to men and women with children under the age of 16. A similar, more ambitious study, using a sample drawn from a more representative cross-section of the population, would be a worthwhile future consideration.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, the stated objectives of the study were achieved, and it was possible to report a number of useful findings, of which the most important were:

- Membership of the Ringwood Library is, at this stage, well above the Australian and overseas average. The percentage of users is almost as high, though less than half are frequent users.
- Those with higher secondary or tertiary education, and those in professional and managerial positions, are more likely to be users.

- Reasons for library use reflect the traditional image of the library. To find information on problems is a reason of very little significance.
- Reasons for non-use relate more to personal factors, than to dissatisfaction with or hostility to the library.
- Most frequently cited information needs for everyday living are in the areas of consumer products and hobbies.
- Education and library use appear to have some relation to information subjects considered important.
- At this stage, the library is not seen as an important source of information for most areas of everyday living.
- Popular sources of information are the media, Ringwood Council, government departments, Ringwood Croydon Advisory Service and professionals.
- An overwhelming majority feels they would like one centre which can supply all kinds of information.
- An overwhelming majority feels that the library can better publicise its services, in particular by making better use of the local papers.

It is felt that there is potential for the library to establish itself as a recognised centre which can be a starting point for all kinds of information. However, success in this area will depend upon a change in the image of the public library in the community. It is also felt that there is scope for the library to initiate information co-ordination in co-operation with other agencies.

While some issues remain to some extent unresolved, it is clear that preliminary findings, particularly in the areas of information needs and sources, provide a useful introduction for any future research which might be implemented.

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MELBOURNE STATE COLLEGE

PLEASE PLACE A TICK IN THE BOX NEXT TO THE ANSWER WHICH IS CORRECT FOR YOU. FOR SOME QUESTIONS THERE ARE FURTHER DIRECTIONS

1 Did you know that there is a public library in Ringwood? YES ☐
(IF YOUR ANSWER IS NO, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 7) NO ☐

2 Do you have a borrower's ticket for the Ringwood Library? YES ☐
NO ☐

3 How often do you use the Ringwood Library?

About once a week ☐

About once a fortnight ☐

About once a month ☐

About once in six months ☐

Sometimes, but less than once in six months ☐

Never ☐

(IF YOUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS "NEVER" PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 6).

4 Why do you use the Ringwood Library? Please place a tick in the box next to the reason which most nearly applies to you. You may tick more than one box if you have more than one reason for using the library:

For study purposes: for example, for a school, college or university course ☐

For reference purposes: to look things up for myself, for example, information on taxation, rates, cooking recipes, travel ☐

For reference purposes; to look things up for my children, for example, for school projects, vocational guidance ☐

To read books and magazines ☐

cont'd.....

To borrow books for myself ☐

To borrow books for my children ☐

To find out information about problems I have, for example, child care problems ☐

To attend meetings, for example, music society meetings ☐

Other (please specify) _____

_____

5 Are you satisfied with the Ringwood Library? YES ☐ NO ☐

If your answer to this question is "no", please give your reasons

_____

_____

_____

IF YOU USE THE LIBRARY FREQUENTLY (THAT IS, AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH) PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 7.

6 Why don't you use the Ringwood Library, or why do you use it very infrequently? Please place a tick in the box next to the reason which most nearly applies to you. You may tick more than one box if you have more than one reason

I use another library ☐

I buy books or borrow from friends ☐

I don't have time to read ☐

I am not interested in reading ☐

The library is too far from my home ☐

I don't have transport to go to the library ☐

The library does not have the kind of books and magazines I like ☐

The library does not supply the kind of information I need ☐

cont'd....

All of my information and entertainment needs are satisfied by television and newspapers ☐

There are too many rules and regulations involved in using the library ☐

The library staff is not very helpful ☐

Other (please specify) _____

_____

7 Could you please write down the number of children who are at present living at home and who are under the age of 16 ____

8 Are you regularly employed away from home?

YES, full-time ☐

YES, part-time ☐

NO ☐

9 Occupation. If presently you have a paid job (either full-time or part-time) please describe it briefly. Try to be as specific as possible, for example, "primary school teacher", "typist", "carpenter", "truck driver", "civil engineer", "computer operator". _____

_____

_____

10 What level of education did you complete?

(If you are, at the moment, studying for a degree, you would not tick the box next to "degree". You would only tick the box if you have completed the degree).

Up to Form 2 ☐

Forms 3 or 4 ☐

Forms 5 or 6 ☐

Diploma ☐

Degree or higher ☐

11 Are you at present doing any regular study? For example, Higher School Certificate, university course, Council for Adult Education course.

YES ☐

NO ☐

cont'd.....

12 We would like to know about people's information needs for every day living.

Below is a list of subjects which people sometimes need to find out about (that is, they need to find information on those subjects). If you think the library would be able to give you information or advice on any of the subjects, you would tick the "YES" boxes in column 2 next to those subjects. If you would go to the library for information on any of the listed subjects, you would tick the "YES" boxes in column 3 next to those subjects. If you have needed information on any of the listed subjects during the past year (whether you got it or not), you would tick in the "YES" boxes in column 4 next to those subjects.

1	2	3	4
Information subject	Do you think that the library would be able to give you information or advice on the subject?	Would you go to the library for information on the subject?	Have you needed information on this subject during the past year?
a) Government (for example, names of members of parliament, names of local councillors, lists of local J.P's).	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
b) Employment	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
c) Child care (for example, where local creches are situated)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
d) Local clubs and organisations	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
e) Welfare (for example, pensions)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
f) Choosing consumer products (for example, refrigerators)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
g) Legal aid	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐

cont'd.....

1	2	3	4
Information subject	Do you think that the library would be able to give you information or advice on the subject?	Would you go to the library for information on the subject?	Have you needed information on this subject during the past year?
h) Education services, (for example, location of government and independent schools)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
i) Housing, (for example, what estate agents there are in the area)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
j) Where to go to pursue or learn a hobby	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
k) Health care services, (for example, names of local doctors, location of local hospitals)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐
l) Counselling, (for example, where to go for marriage guidance services)	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐	YES ☐ NO ☐

cont'd.....

13 Underneath the box below ☐

The information subjects you were asked about in Question 12 are listed again. This time I would like you to tell me where else you might go to find the information, or what other sources you might use (APART FROM THE LIBRARY). Listed in the box are suggested places you might go to find the information. The places are numbered so that you can use the numbers in the squares next to each information subject.

Example: If you feel you would go to the Ringwood Council and the Ringwood/Croydon Advisory Service for information on "child care", the squares next to that subject would appear like this:-

[4] [5]

For each subject there is a line for you to write in any other place to which you might go, or source of information you might use.

1. A government department, for example, Victorian Department of Social Welfare	7. Local member of parliament
2. Police Station	8. Maroondah Social Health Centre
3. Solicitor	9. Family, friends or neighbours
4. Ringwood Council	10. Access (Outer Eastern Regional Council for Social Development)
5. Ringwood/Croydon Advisory Service (a Citizens' Advice Bureau)	11. Local doctor
6. Minister, priest or rabbi	12. News media (T.V., radio, newspapers, etc.)

INFORMATION SUBJECT

(a) Government (for example, names of members of parliament names of local councillors, lists of local J.P's) ☐☐

Other (please specify) _____

(b) Employment ☐☐

Other (please specify) _____

(c) Child care (for example, where local creches are situated) ☐☐

Other (please specify) _____

(d) Local clubs and organisations ☐☐

Other (please specify) _____

(e) Welfare (for example, pensions) ☐☐

Other (please specify) _____

cont'd

(f) Choosing consumer products (for example, refrigerators)

Other (please specify) _____

(g) Legal aid

Other (please specify) _____

(h) Education services

Other (please specify) _____

(i) Housing (for example, what estate agents there are in the area)

Other (please specify) _____

(j) Where to go to pursue or learn a hobby

Other (please specify) _____

(k) Health care services (for example, names of local doctors, location of local hospitals)

Other (please specify) _____

(l) Counselling (for example, where to go for marriage guidance services)

Other (please specify) _____

14 Would it be useful for you if there was one centre, for example, the public library, which was able to supply all kinds of information which you might need? YES ☐ NO ☐

(IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 14 IS NO PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 17)

15 If there was such a centre, would you use it? YES ☐ NO ☐

16 Would you like to be able to 'phone in to that centre for information? YES ☐ NO ☐

17 Did you know that the Richwood Library has meeting rooms which can be used by local clubs and organisations? YES ☐ NO ☐

18 Do you think that the library could better publicise its services? YES ☐ NO ☐

If your answer is YES, in what way do you think that the library could do this?

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

APPENDIX B

Occupations of Respondents According to Scale Developed by Broom and Lancaster*

Occupation	Number	Percentage
1. Upper professional (architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc.)	13	6.2%
2. Graziers, wheat and sheep farmers	-	-
3. Lower professional (nurses, teachers, draftsmen, creative artists, technicians, etc.)	36	17.2%
4. Managerial (public service administrators, inspectors, managers, etc.)	11	5.2%
5. Self employed shop proprietors	6	2.8%
6. Other farmers (fruit, vegetable, poultry, dairy farmers, etc.)	1	.5%
7. Clerical (book-keepers, typists, clerks, insurance salesmen, commercial travellers, postal workers, etc.)	28	13.3%
8. Members of Armed Services and Police Force	1	.5%
9. Craftsmen and foremen (tailors, fitters, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, etc.)	19	9%
10. Shop assistants	4	1.9%
11. Operatives and process workers (metal workers, pottery workers, food workers, chemical production workers, construction equipment operators, etc.)	7	3.3%
12. Drivers	5	2.4%
13. Personal, domestic and other service workers (salesmen, caretakers, cooks, waiters, hairdressers, etc.)	10	4.7%
14. Miners	-	-
15. Farm and rural workers	-	-

Occupation	Number	Percentage
24. Labourers (storemen, packers, materials workers, etc.)	4	1.3%
7*. Inadequately defined	3	1.0%

* For complete list of examples in each category see Brown, Leonard and F. Launceston Jones. Opportunity and Attainment in Australia.

APPENDIX E

Summary of Major Chi-Square Analyses*

Variables	Chi-Square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Education by frequency of use	49.69	4	Significant
Occupation by frequency of use	45.07	8	Significant
Education by reference purposes as a reason for use	0.08	1	Not significant
Degree study by study purposes as a reason for use	3.84	1	Significant
Education by testing or borrowing of books as a reason for frequent or non-use	1.81	1	Not significant
Frequency of use by use of another library as a reason for infrequent or non-use	11.89	1	Significant
Education by use of another library as a reason for infrequent or non-use	6.72	1	Significant
Occupation by use of another library as a reason for infrequent or non-use	15.34	3	Significant
Degree study by use of another library as a reason for infrequent or non-use	40.22	1	Significant
Education by lack of time to read as a reason for infrequent or non-use	3.38	1	Significant
Frequency of use by unavailability of required information as a reason for infrequent or non-use	7.2	1	Significant
Education by unavailability of required information as a reason for infrequent or non-use	5.35	1	Significant
Degree study by unavailability of required information as a reason for infrequent or non-use	19.32	1	Significant

...ables	Chi-Square	Degrees of Freedom	Significant
...quency of use by total satis-...tion gained from TV and news-...ers as a reason for infrequent ...ary use	3.26	1	Not signi-ficant
...ation by satisfaction with the ...ary's services	4.62	1	Significant
...ular study by satisfaction with ...library's services	19.24	2	Significant
...ation by need for information ...consumer products	10.08	1	Significant
...quency of use by need for ...rmation on housing	4.88	1	Significant
...quency of use by need for ...rmation on health care ...vices	5.34	1	Significant
...rary membership by belief ...rary can offer information or ...ice on consumer products	15.24	2	Significant
...ation by belief library can ...er information or advice on ...rnment	5.1	1	Significant
...ation by belief library can ...er information or advice on ...umer products	22.48	1	Significant

...here necessary, Yates' correction for small cell sizes was applied to the appropriate analyses.